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The North End Highway

EXTENSION of Vancouver Island's east coast road from Kelsey Bay 65 miles to Part Hardy would make an excellent project for joint federal and provincial action, if the administration at Ottawa is willing to consider it. The extension would involve two years' work at a time when it is much needed; serve a national as well as a provincial purpose, and link up five growing industrial and other communities which now have only sea access to the rest of the province. Premier Bennett's announcement that he will make the proposal to Ottawa that the Port Hardy extension be treated as a national work project on a shared half-cost basis with B.C. is very welcome.

If the Dominion is looking for work projects which would ease the pressure of unemployment, and at the same time serve some useful and productive purpose, the Kelsey Bay-Port Hardy thoroughfare would make one good outlet. The cost of the complete extension, an estimated $20,000,000, would be cut in half in co-operation by the two governments and the outlay spread over a period of not less than two years. Such a project, further, could be commenced in stages, suiting employment needs by the work to be done. The finished road would provide more than merely a new highway on the north-eastern end of Vancouver Island; it would literally integrate Island road systems into the bargain. Some 10,000 people directly would be given a road link with B.C. and the rest of Canada they do not have now.

British Columbia is making a constructive suggestion in this matter, in connection with an outlay that would be self-recoverable. Such a link would end the present land isolation of five east coast communities; give Vancouver Island a scenic driveway without equal in a virgin setting; materially strengthen defence of the Pacific littoral; and supply needed jobs for numbers of B.C. citizens who have been unemployed for months.

Even if the federal government cannot see its way clear to enter such an agreement immediately, the B.C. administration could profitably make its own start on the project. Mining, lumber, pulp and fishing industries are located in the region, while two useful hydro-electric power sites are adjacent. In view of the considerable sums spent on mainland highway projects in the last few years, Vancouver Island's turn would be timely. The Port Hardy extension would be a godsend to the Island if begun now.

Blasting the Sands

THERE is enough alarm about nuclear testing to make any explosion of this kind on Canadian territory a matter for great care. Atomic experts are not agreed on the question of radiation, for example, and that alone would impel the utmost safety precautions in the proposed Athabaska experiment. Albertans and others, including residents of this province, will want to be assured of the safeguards before the final step is taken.

The idea is to explode a nuclear device deep in the Athabaska oil sands in an effort to make possible the extraction of the oil which lies in immense quantities but which hitherto has resisted other efforts at extraction. The potential value of the oil is worth the most vigorous attempt and if nuclear energy is to be applied to peaceful use here might be one instance where it could be turned to good account.

Any such explosion probably would invite criticism and misinterpretation, from Soviet Russia at least. Canada is not a nuclear country in the sense of being party to the testing of nuclear military weapons or techniques. So far that field belongs to Russia, the United States and Great Britain. Moscow might read into an Athabaska explosion the entry of this country into the nuclear race or its incidence an extension of Western experiments; even if only for propaganda purposes, especially since it is an American firm which would undertake the operation.

This factor can be disregarded nevertheless, for Canada's international record is clean and Soviet Russia has no warrant for throwing stones. More to the point are the safety measures to be calculated, and in fact the feasibility of the scheme itself. Radio-active contamination above or below ground is the hazard, thus the indication that a special federal committee will be invoked to inquire into every aspect of the operation before the green light is given. Nothing less will be expected, notwithstanding the potential wealth clinging to the Athabaska sands. Human health and welfare come first.

Too Late for Second Thoughts

MAYOR SCURRAH and the city council have acted with proper regard for civic procedure in ignoring requests couched in the language of demands for another ratepayers' vote on the recently approved $1,000,000 parking building bylaw. The bylaw was presented to the ratepayers in accordance with the statutory requirements; in addition to being advertised as prescribed the proposals were amply canvassed in advance of legal notice; the bylaw was then voted upon and passed, and that is the end of the matter.

In the circumstances a demand for a second vote is irregular. It is impertinent also for the mayor to be challenged to debate the plan on a public platform after the ratepayers have given the council authority to proceed.

For excellent reasons—including that of expense—the council was anxious to have the ratepayers say yes or no to the proposal last December. But nothing was done in secret, and the council refrained from "high pressuring" the voters. Details of the scheme were extensively publicized through every available medium, and there was the full 30-day period as required by law for examination of the bylaw and the marshalling of opposition.

If some property owners did not bother to vote, as is so often the case, or did not take enough trouble to study the plan, that to put it bluntly is their look-out. They cannot come along more than a month afterwards with demands for another chance. If any disgruntled individual or group of ratepayers were allowed that sort of right or privilege councils never could get anything done.

Split in Coalition

By JOSEPH MACSWEEN
Canadian Press Staff Writer

THE collapse of Premier Amintore Fanfani's Italian government is reminiscent in some respects of France's pell-mell political life under the Fourth Republic.

Perhaps Italian President Giovanni Gronchi is tempted at times to wish for an Italian Charles de Gaulle who would restore political stability with a strong hand as has happened in France.

Italy, like France, has suffered since the Second World War from a multiplicity of political parties, including a powerful Communist party hungering for power.

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The immediate cause of Fanfani's downfall after less than seven months of power was the manoeuvring of the Socialists. Similar Socialist manoeuvring felled Premier Adone Zoli after only 22 days in office, and Premier Antonio Segni after 22 months.

The Socialists are divided into two large camps. The right-wing Social Democrats served in Fanfani's coalition government with his Christian Democrats, while the left-wing Italian Socialist party under Pietro Nenni was in the opposition.

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Ironically, Nenni brought on the crisis by moving slightly toward the right. At a recent party congress he announced that his group henceforth will follow an independent line, breaking away from the Communists with whom Nenni has been allied since the war.

At the same time, however, he reiterated his opposition to the Fanfani government and declared that he would continue to battle any government dominated by the Christian Democrats, the centre group that has held a commanding position in Italian politics most of the time since the war.

The British Scene... by Giles

"'Emma,' I say, 'I don't care how many princes we've got staying at the pub—I'm not wearing my Sunday boots.' 'Oh yes you are,' she say."

(Rained out during a coot-shooting party, Prince Philip and his son the Prince of Wales were put up for the night in a remote Norfolk inn.

Thinking Aloud

". . . of shoes—and ships—and sealing wax—of cabbages and kings."

By TOM TAYLOR

BREATHES there a man, to paraphrase the great Sir Walter, who never to himself hath said: "My race is the tops." Last weekend for instance I savored something of the self-adulation of ethnic groups who gather to praise themselves, no others being willing to undertake the chore for similar reasons, and did not find it at all upsetting. One's pride needs nourishing even if one's reason looks on with certain reservation and the suspicion that as a motto "second to none" does not necessarily mean one may not have a peer.

There would be no one worth a darn, as colloquialism has it, if he did not think his forebears were the ultimate and the race from which he sprang the salt of the earth. Only as it happens the earth is very big and it can hold a lot of salt when spread over its surface. A reminder that it is so spread was given to his countrymen recently by Mr. Richard Casey, a Commonwealth figure of some eminence, when he told a Sydney, Australia, audience that there is no inherently superior race in the world.

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I have a sneaking suspicion this will become more evident as the twentieth century draws to its close and the white man for one is hard pressed to match his ego with equivalent achievement, but the notion, of course, is hard to take.

When I am puffed up myself over my racial distinction I bring myself to task, sometimes anyway, by remembrance of the courtly Indian gentleman I interviewed some 20 years ago and whose erudition and command of a language that was mine, not his, made me feel very small indeed. It was difficult that morning to hang on to the inbred assumption that I belonged to the elite of the earth. And only the other day a friend was telling me that the most attractive young men to seek employment in his establishment these days, if only by virtue of their polite and respectful manners, were those who have recently come to this city from Europe.

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The Australian foreign minister recalled his own experiences when he was governor of Bengal, a term of office which, he said, disabused his mind of any idea of superiority of race. The peoples with whom he had to deal he discovered to be as good and in many cases better than he was. This was frank talk to countrymen who, one judges, are as alive to native pride as one may find anywhere. Conversely, of course, the Indians who reoriented Mr. Casey probably breathe to themselves the magic of race too, but western man has not conspicuously admitted theirs has equal verity with his own.

Peoples will show contrast in temperament as well as in color, naturally, and their cultures—meaning their personality, outlook, national nuances—will not be of equal degree and fashion. In this respect they probably never will be, but that is a different matter from their inherent worth and potential capability. As Mr. Casey projected his thought, there are nations more advanced temporarily in the realms of education, economics and living standards than others, but "there is no inherent superiority in any race or country."

To drive home his point Mr. Casey added, "Believe me," and many of us may be inclined not to. It is not easy to rid ourselves of preconceived notions grown part of our skin almost, but I fancy that one of these years we had better.

Letter from London

Chronic Ills of British Railways

By RICHARD L. THOMAS

IT must be true that a prophet is without honor in his own country. It seems strange that a personal experience of British Railways of a rather woeful service between London and the Thanet coast should have inspired more vitriol than all the political discussions, religious references or those things which are normally a stand-by for abuse and injured comment.

After reading quite a pile of letters from Victoria I have come to the conclusion that Canadian Pacific is the manifestation of all that is evil. One correspondent suggests that "The Canadian" is not much of a train, another with more justification suggests that a transcontinental train and a Kent coast train are not comparable. Others assure me that they have ridden a clean train in Britain (agreed) and that there are dirty trains in Canada (agreed) and my most abusive correspondent who has, it seems, ridden on the locomotive of the Golden Arrow suggests that trains just do not run late in Britain and that I was highly imaginative.

Ineded there was an implied inference that Canadian Pacific was paying me to abuse British Railways or something of that sort, which makes one wonder just how low critics can get in a free democracy.

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The main contention, however, is that conditions are not truly comparative in Britain and Canada—which is broadly true. A gentleman who names many of the "named" trains in Britain assures me from Vancouver Island that these are "crack" trains. My contention is merely that I have ridden on far more comfortable trains between Montreal and Toronto, Toronto and Windsor and Montreal and Quebec where distances are comparative. Again it is true that some of our trains are faster—but in my original article I happened to be discussing comfort and punctuality.

One thing which has emerged is that railways in Britain are still highly regarded overseas—a factor which may be attributed to nostalgic memories and highly competitive free enterprise. The regular user tends to become disillusioned. The period since nationalization has been a time of declining service and ever-increasing fares. That may be true in Canada, too—but that does not make it less true in Britain.

Most Britons are reasonably tolerant. They do not aks for the impossible. Most of the criticism of British Railways at the present time is that they do not perform the service which they say they will perform. They offer to carry you from Cannon Street to Herne Bay or Canterbury in 1½ hours and then take 2¼ hours to do the job, sometimes 2½ or three hours. There would be far fewer complaints if there was less pretence at schedules and more reality.

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There has been an irritating number of locomotive failures, and it is poor consolation to the passenger who misses his boat train from London or his airplane from London airport to be informed that these locomotives will be replaced later in the year by diesel or electric traction—tantamount to an admission that maintenance on old stock is inefficient. The traveller is now recognizing that timetables do not necessarily mean what they say;

Every traveller knows that every transport organization falls down occasionally; that is inevitable. "The Canadian" runs late on occasions; no doubt travellers have missed boat connections that way too—but the criticism comes when the exception becomes the rule. There was the classic example the other day when a Scottish train arrived two hours late and the loudspeakers announced "British Railways apologize for the late arrival of this train. The reason was due to delay." That followed a promise by British Railways that at least passengers would be told why trains were late.

Everyone in Britain hopes that the modernization plan will work. The introduction of fast trains, new rolling stock, punctual schedules and so on could make all the difference between the present dismal performance by British Railways and their promises. What most of us complain about, however, apart from punctuality, are the little things. The uncleanliness of carriages is one thing; five years ago this was due to shortage of labor but today there is 2½% unemployment. Clean table cloths in dining cars, better and more varied menus, and simple facilities like checking through luggage would make a lot of difference.

Maybe things are getting better. Next summer most of the South Coast of England will be served by electrified services and we are promised faster and more frequent services, and with it new rolling stock. There will be more main line diesel trains, more electrification in the north of England and some faster schedules are promised on all lines. Let us hope it all comes to pass.

Most of us remember the day when the railways in Britain we[illegible] model to the world in speed, [illegible]ness and comfort. If we can [illegible] to that everyone will be ha[illegible]y—b[illegible] broadly it would seem that we need more practical railwaymen on the job and fewer civil service administrators and retired brass hats. Not all the frustration is with passengers—a great deal of it is with the old railwaymen who find themselves unable to do their job efficiently.

I hope it will be possible to report in another six months that British Railways are on the mend. They have been sick far too long.

Canada's Airlines

Policy Should Be Explicit

(From The Edmonton Journal)

JUDGING by the recommendations summarized for tabling in the House of Commons, the Air Transport Board experienced some difficulty in deciding on the CPA application for transcontinental rights. On the basis of economic analyses and other evidence submitted at its hearings, the board found a number of reasons for denying the application. Yet it also found that "the position of CPA as a Canadian carrier operating international services needs strengthening" and for this reason it proposed that the restricted licence be granted.

What the board had to say about the interests of the public as users of air transport, we do not yet know. So far as the matter may be judged by the material contained in the summary, the board appears to have concerned itself very largely with the economics of air transport and the economic positions and relations of operating carriers. This may be well enough for the board, which is not responsible for public policy, but it will not suffice for the government.

The government is now committed by implication to a revision of aviation policy. It should not be content with a commitment, nor with the approval of particular recommendations affecting specific carriers, but should undertake a basic and comprehensive revision of policy primarily in the interests of the consuming public. The principles of the new formula should be made known to the country.

This is essential for at least two reasons:

1. The public is entitled to know, and should not have to guess at the principles of policy upon which the government will base its regulation of air transport. For example, does the government propose to restrict the rate of growth of Canadian air transport or to encourage expansion at maximum rate?

2. The air carriers and competing surface carriers need to know what the principles are if they are to estimate their prospects and make their plans for the future on a reasonably reliable basis.

Since an intensive investigation of the position of regional carriers now is proposed by the Air Transport Board, and has long been needed, the government might well deem it advisable to await the results before crystallizing its new policy; but much thought should be given to the whole matter in the meantime.

The primary consideration must be the long term interests of the country as a whole and the needs and wants of its citizens; but these cannot be separated from the larger context of world affairs in which accelerating change and growth, both technological and political, are increasingly dominant.

The Packsack

By GREGORY CLARK

AFTER years of struggling along from hand to mouth and a permanent annual deficit, many a social service organization or other association dedicated to worthy causes such as conservation or public welfare in some branch or other comes to the conclusion that what they want on their board of directors is a prominent and successful businessman—somebody who knows how to get things done.

And after a lot of artful search they at last persuade a big gun to come aboard and give their worthy organization the hard-headed direction it needs. Very often it is through his wife that he is commandeered.

As a rule, he wrecks the organization. By the time he has grown sick and tired of his good-hearted but dither-headed fellow directors, he has bullied many of them into a huff, reorganized the office on a sound business basis which the funds can't afford, and the sweet old voluntary workers have all vanished.

One group in which I have long taken an interest has had, however, a resounding success. I asked the wealthy old man who has been the life and soul of it what the secret is, as far as getting prosperous big shots into these volunteer societies.

"The idea of shanghaiing a wealthy man into an association," he said, "is to have him shanghai other wealthy men into it. Wealthy men are great old inter-wealthy bulldozers, as a rule. They know who's got the money. Never get one wealthy man. Get twenty, or fifty. And then she hums.